

**Families, Seniors and Human Services Committee**  
**Hearing on SB 584-588, 591**  
**11-13-13**

Thank you Senator Emmons for the invitation and to speak this afternoon. It is truly an honor to be before you in this historic moment in the fight against human trafficking in Michigan. It has also been an honor to serve on your Citizens' Advisory Board for Human Trafficking. I would also like to thank all of the Families, Seniors and Human Services Committee members for taking up this incredibly important issue.

**Global Issue**

27 million slaves worldwide – more than any time in human history

*Freetheslaves.net*

\$32 billion a year industry

Second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world (illegal drugs being #1)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *HHS Fights to Stem Human Trafficking*  
<<http://www.hhs.gov/news/factsheet/humantrafficking.html>>

UNODC, *Human trafficking: organized crime and the multibillion dollar sale of people* <[http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/July/human-trafficking\\_-\\_organized-crime-and-the-multibillion-dollar-sale-of-people.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/July/human-trafficking_-_organized-crime-and-the-multibillion-dollar-sale-of-people.html)>

Occurs in 161 countries

Crosses all barriers of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and gender

Each year, as many as 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. (labor and sex trafficking.) This doesn't include domestic victims who are being trafficked.

Alison Siskin and Liana Sun-Wyler, *Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Policy and Issues for Congress*, Summary, p 15 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34317.pdf>>

An estimated 300,00 children in the U.S. are at risk every year for commercial sexual exploitation.

(U.S. Department of Justice)

Average age of entry into commercial sex slavery in the U.S. is 13 years old

*manafreedom.com*

Has been called by some the "largest Human <sup>Dignity</sup> <sub>Right</sub> issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"  
Indeed, it is modern-day slavery

**Local Issue**

It was bad enough that this crime existed overseas, but to find it in my own backyard was unthinkable. I live in one of the safest cities, Troy, and yet we are not exempt from this horrific crime.

B's testimony of the hotels in Troy, Sterling Heights, Utica, etc.

Hers is certainly not an isolated incident.

I just received an email yesterday from my State Representative's (Martin Howyrlak) office. They said a woman called them who had witnessed trafficking in Troy and wanted to know how she could get involved.

U of M Human Trafficking Law Clinic is helping victims from cities all over Michigan.

Michigan is a source, transit and destination state for trafficking (due to our international borders and waterways, and our close proximity to interstate freeways)

FBI "Operation Cross Country" (July 2013) out of a total of 76 cities – the Detroit area ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the recovery of juveniles (10), and first in the arrest of pimps (18).

Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Operation Cross Country: Recovering Victims of Child Sex Trafficking* <<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2013/july/operation-crosscountry-recovering-victims-of-child-sex-trafficking>> (accessed October 21, 2013)

**The Challenge for Victims**

This crime devastates the lives of its victims...it affects them psychologically, emotionally, physically, economically, relationally and spiritually. It leaves many of its victims severely traumatized. It robs them of their childhood, their dignity, their basic rights, their hope, and even their lives.

Victims who are fortunate enough to break free have been faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges and needs in attempting to rebuild their lives. (Housing; medical services; psychological

counseling, including a trauma-informed approach; legal assistance; substance abuse assistance; life skills; childcare; transportation; financial assistance; credit repair, etc.) Often times, they have been "re-victimized" by a system that has grossly misdiagnosed their condition and has been unable to provide for their needs. They have been viewed and treated as criminals instead of the victims that they are. Those who are coming out of trafficking situations need real solutions!

### **The Response**

As lawmakers, people of faith, and citizens of this great nation we have a responsibility to respond to the injustices of our day. The prevalence and seriousness of this heinous crime demands an urgent, strategic, and comprehensive response. The passage of this important legislation is part of that response. Treating our 16 & 17 year olds as victims and not criminals, providing them the counseling they need, and clearing human trafficking victims' criminal records are significant steps toward assisting victims in rebuilding their lives and becoming productive members of society.

I believe we are fitted for the times we live in, much the same as Martin Luther King and William Wilberforce were. We have the platform and the power to make difference in the lives of so many people. I thank all of you for the role you will play in passing effective legislation to rescue those who are being oppressed against their will and to bring traffickers to justice. And I urge you to do what is in your power as instruments of freedom and justice to support and pass this victim-centered (and solution-based) legislation.

Let's make Michigan a leader and model in the fight against human trafficking!

*"Responsibility is the price of freedom."* Elbert Hubbard

*"Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it."* Pericles

**Respectfully submitted by**

**Mary Lou Cole**

*Human Trafficking Task Force Leader*

*Embassy Covenant Church International, Troy, MI*

*Member of Metro Coalition of Congregations ( a project of Harriet Tubman Center)*

*Member of Senator Judy Emmons Citizens' Advisory Board for Human Trafficking*

**Contact Info:**

[mlcole0608@gmail.com](mailto:mlcole0608@gmail.com)

248-808-0788